

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) A method of maintaining undifferentiated biological cells in culture in vitro comprising culturing the cells in the presence of NM23 protein, wherein the NM23 acts to inhibit differentiation and maturation of said cultured cells, and wherein the cultured cells are selected from the group consisting of stem cells and precursor cells.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the NM23 protein acts as a survival factor for said cultured cells.

3. (canceled)

4. (canceled)

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cultured cells are for therapeutic use.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cultured cells are for non therapeutic use.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the cultured cells are selected from the group comprising consisting of mesenchymal cells, haematopoietic cells, cells of the central nervous system (CNS) and epidermal cells.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cells are collected from the blood or bone marrow.

9. (withdrawn) A method of preparing a biological cell for therapeutic use, the method comprising the consecutive or concurrent steps of:

- i) culturing the biological cell in the presence of NM23 protein; and